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E4

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PTQ8498

RELEASED IN PART
B6, B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION INR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 ACQ-00 DODE-00 WHA-00 DS-00 VC-00
TEDE-00 VCE-00 AC-01 NSAE-00 ACE-00 IRM-00 DSCC-00
DRL-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /003W
-----5CD382 242213Z /38

R 242213Z JAN 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4602
INFO CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000189

INR FOR COZART
NSC FOR AMBASSADOR MAISTO
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/08
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
SUBJ: NOW, WHAT TO DO FOR AN ENCORE?

CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE FREDERICK B. COOK. REASONS 1.5 (B & D.)

REF: CARACAS 0114

1. (U) SUMMARY: THE OPPOSITION MARCH WAS A SUCCESS WELL BEYOND ANYONE'S EXPECTATIONS. BUT THERE IS NO CLEAR FOLLOW-UP. THE NEXT KEY DATE IS FEBRUARY 4, IN WHICH CHAVEZ INTENDS TO CELEBRATE THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAILED COUP THAT BEGAN HIS IMPROBABLE ROAD TO POWER. OPPOSITION GROUPS WANT TO PROCLAIM THIS AS A NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING. MEANWHILE, DISCUSSIONS FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 24 JAN 2012
DATE/CASE ID: 06 APR 2005 200400109

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ARE STILL ONGOING. END SUMMARY.

THE OPPOSITION IS JUBILANT

2. (U) THE OPPOSITION MARCH WAS A SUCCESS WELL BEYOND ANYONE'S EXPECTATIONS. AS NOTED IN REFTTEL, AN ATTENDANCE OF 50,000 WAS SEEN BY ALL AS THE OPTIMISTIC SCENARIO. AT THE STARTING TIME OF THE MARCH, ONE ORGANIZER FROM ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) COMMENTED TO POLOFF: "I THINK WE SURPASSED THE 50,000 MARK!" WHAT HE AND HIS FELLOW ORGANIZERS DID NOT EXPECT THEN WAS THAT THEY MAY HAVE HAD EVEN QUADRUPLLED THAT FIGURE. (BOTH NATIONAL DAILIES IN CARACAS ESTIMATED 200,000.)

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3. (U) [REDACTED] PARTY VETERAN, TOLD POLOFF THAT NONE OF HIS PARTY'S LEADERSHIP COULD REMEMBER A GATHERING THIS LARGE. "NOT EVEN ROMULO BETANCOURT (AD FOUNDER AND FORMER VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT) COULD CONVOKE SUCH A RALLY." HE EVEN DOUBTED THAT CHAVEZ HIMSELF HAD SURPASSED IT DURING HIS POPULAR CAMPAIGN IN 1998. OTHER EMBASSY OPPOSITION CONTACTS COMMENTED HOW FAVORABLE IT WAS THAT NO SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY, NGO, OR LABOR UNION COULD TAKE SOLE CREDIT FOR THIS EVENT--ALL CONTRIBUTED SELFLESSLY TO ITS SUCCESS. SOME NOTED TOO HOW SPONTANEOUS THE SUPPORT WAS, WITH SO MANY MARCHERS UNAFFILIATED WITH ANY GROUP. AS JUSTICE FIRST POLITICIAN LEOPOLDO MARTINEZ PUT IT: "THE PEOPLE DISCOVERED POLITICS YESTERDAY."

B6

CHAVISTAS MAKE EXCUSES

4. (U) [REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT BOTH MARCHES WERE "VERY BIG," BUT HE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE MEDIA'S LACK OF OBJECTIVITY IN DISPARAGING THE PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATION. "OUR DEMONSTRATION WAS MUCH DENSER," HE CLAIMED, AND "THREE TIMES LARGER" IF YOU COUNTED ONLY THE PEOPLE FROM CARACAS WHO ATTENDED. (WE INTERPRET THIS COMMENT AS AN ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY CHAVEZ'S STATEMENT IN HIS JANUARY 23 CADENA THAT HIS MARCH HAD THREE TIMES MORE PEOPLE THAN THE "MARCHITA DE LOS ESCUALIDOS.") [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] CONCEDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MARCH WAS
BADLY ORGANIZED COMPARED TO THE OPPOSITION MARCH. BUT THE
OPPOSITION'S WAS "MORE VIOLENT" BECAUSE SOME OF THE
MARCHERS CARRIED STICKS. (THESE WERE FLAG POLES, MOSTLY.)
FOR HIS PART, [REDACTED]

B6

[REDACTED] STRUCK A MODERATE
NOTE BY DEEMING BOTH MARCHES SUCCESSES.

B6

HOW TO FOLLOW UP?

5. (C) CHAVEZ PLANS FOR CELEBRATING THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF
HIS FAILED COUP ATTEMPT ARE FIRING UP, WITH A GRANTING OF
LAND TITLES TO CARACAS SLUM DWELLERS ON FEBRUARY 1,
TO BE FOLLOWED BY MARCHES AROUND THE COUNTRY, CULMINATING
WITH AN UNSPECIFIED EVENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY DATE FEBRUARY
4. MEANWHILE, THE OPPOSITION IS PLOTTING ITS NEXT MOVE.
ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]

B6

[REDACTED] CALLING ANOTHER MARCH SO SOON WOULDN'T BE PRUDENT.
WHAT IS NOW BEING PLANNED IS A NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING ON
FEBRUARY 4 TO REMEMBER THE VICTIMS OF CHAVEZ'S COUP.

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	DS-00	VC-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 000189

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6. (C) MORE CONCRETE PLANS ARE AFOOT TO TAKE THE OPPOSITION
COUNTERATTACK TO A NEW LEVEL. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] THE DISCUSSION FOR A GENERAL
STRIKE-"WHICH WILL INCLUDE THE PARTICIPATION OF EVERYONE,
NOT JUST ORGANIZED LABOR"- IS STILL ONGOING. HE ADDED THAT
THE LABOR CONFEDERATION ALSO INTENDS TO GATHER SIGNATURES
FOR A "PROROGUING REFERENDUM" AIMED AT NULLIFYING THE
WIDELY OFFENSIVE ENABLING LAW PACKAGE PASSED LAST NOVEMBER.

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7. (C) COMMENT: [REDACTED]

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END COMMENT.

COOK.

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